A review of P-Centre models

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Contents

- Introduction and motivation
- About the models
- Test corpus
- Comparison of predicted P-centres
- Subjective evaluation of predicted P-centres
- Conclusion
Introduction and motivation

- The P-centre (or Perceptual Attack Time) is hypothesised to be...
  - the perceptual “moment of occurrence” of a sound
  - that which is regular in a perceptually regular sequence of sounds

- P-centres and rhythm (by definition)
  - The rhythm of a sequence of sounds is given by the interval between P-centres
  - Applies to perception and production

- Typical P-centre assumptions
  - The P-centre is a single unique location (not a region) in a sound
  - The p-centre is context independent (e.g. doesn’t depend on neighbouring sounds in a sequence)
  - All the models being reviewed make these assumptions
    (though Pompino-Marschall does suggest two conflicting features exist)

- Many unresolved questions (not addressed in this work)
  - E.g. Are P-centres a feature of all sounds? Is speech special?
Good P-centre model(s) required...
- to accurately analyse rhythm in the natural performance of music or production of speech
- to accurately construct/edit/synthesise speech or music with a specific rhythm

Several existing models
- Are their predictions similar or different?
- Do their predictions match subjective perception?

No published comparison or evaluation of all models exists (to our knowledge)
- Most recent model published in 1997
- This work is in progress
About the models

- 2 broad categories
  - Using local onset features
    - Rapp-Holmgren (1971)
    - Vos & Rasch (1981)
    - Gordon (1987)
    - Scott (1993)
  - Using weighted sum of “global” features
    - Marcus (1981)
    - Howell (1984/1988) [not implemented in this work]
    - Pompino-Marschall (1989)
    - Harsin (1997)
- **Models using local onset features**
  - Insensitive to post-onset differences
  - Threshold approaches insensitive to supra-threshold differences
  - Simple AM approaches fairly insensitive to timbre/pitch changes
  - P-centre “decision” available before sound has ended

- **Models using weighted sum of “global” features**
  - Sensitive to differences throughout the sound, but usually weighted to favour onset
  - Speech segment approaches may not be applicable to non-speech sounds
  - “Events” identified in event based approaches may not be perceptually relevant
  - P-centre “decision” only after end of sound

- **All current models**
  - Require isolated sounds with single P-centres, so no continuous sequences
Data used for modelling

- Due to difficulty measuring P-centres, most models have been trained/fitted with a sparse corpus
  - Marcus: one ... nine (natural); ba, da, ga, ta, ka (edited)
  - Vos and Rasch: Synthetic sawtooth (various onset ramps)
  - Gordon: 16 instrument tones (re-synthesised natural)
  - Pompino-Marschall: ma, am, shi (synthesised, various durations)
  - Scott: one, two (several speakers); la, ra, wa, ya (peak clipped), eight (edited), cha-sha, wa, ae (various onset ramps)
  - Harsin: Sha, na, ra; ta da ka ga; ash, an, ar (edited)

- Modelling data also differs by
  - Frequency content of sounds (nyquist limited)
  - Loudness of sounds (e.g. Gordon used 90dB)
  - Presentation method and subjective listening paradigm

- Can the models be successfully applied to...
  - sounds not in the training corpus?
  - sounds presented in a different environment?
Vos & Rasch model

![Signal and Rectified Signal Diagram]

- Signal
- Rectified Signal
- Amplitude
- Amplitude (dB)
- Onset threshold
- Silence/masker level

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Gordon’s model

Acoustic signal

normalized with rise model

Power envelope slope

Slope threshold

Time (ms)

Amplitude

Time (ms)
Scott’s model

signal

channel at 578Hz

LP channel envelope

Marcus’ (and Rapp’s) model

![Graph showing signal, power, frequency, and power values for different frequencies and times.](image)
Pompino-Marschall’s model

signal + initial delay

x2: multires intensity (dB)

Hz

x5: filtered bark intensity (dB)

dB

Barks

x7: specific loudness (sones)

sones

Barks

Time (ms)

partial events

bark 18

bark 12

bark 4

0 100 200 300

Time (ms)
Harsin’s model

- Bandpass/rectified channel
- Envelope $^{0.3}$
- Envelope modulations
- Perceptual envelope

<table>
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<td>300</td>
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</table>

- 4.3 Hz
- 9.0 Hz
- 18.4 Hz
- 36.3 Hz
- M
- V
- PC
- Env Vel
- MV

Test corpus

- The need for a standard corpus
  - Speech recognition/synthesis has benefited enormously from the existence of phonetically labelled speech corpora
  - Enables researchers to concentrate on modelling or P-centre measurement as appropriate
    - P-centre research is slowed by need for each researcher to label similar data using subjective listening experiments
  - There is currently no corpus of P-centre labelled sounds
  - Database published by Patel, Lofqvist et al (1999) has some limitations and is not labelled

- Would a P-centre labelled corpus be of use to other rhythm researchers?
  - Is there interest in participating/collaborating on such a database?
Our test corpus

- 189 sounds in three categories
  - Natural speech
    - Almost exclusively isolated monosyllables
    - Some sounds recorded at NUIM
    - A subset of the database published by Patel also included
  - Synthetic sounds
    - Amplitude modulated noise, pure and complex tones
    - Some from NUIM, and all those from the database of Collins
  - Musical Instruments
    - A subset of the database of sounds used by Collins
• All sounds approximately equalised for loudness
  – All sounds equalised to same loudness as a (nominally) 60dB SPL tone
  – BS 1770 weighting curve with short time scale (125ms) exponential averaging

• Reference sound
  – A 0dB noise to tone mix of pink noise and a harmonic tone with the same spectral shape
    • Intended to mitigate streaming effects when repetitively alternated with a variety of target stimuli
  – 200ms duration with cosine shaped onset (20ms) and offset (180ms)
  – “Absolute” P-Centre of reference sound assumed to be zero
Objective evaluation method

- Use models to predict P-centres for all sounds
- For each model, normalise predicted P-centres relative to reference sound

Analysis

- Which sound’s predicted P-centres vary most/least?
- Which model’s predictions vary most/least?
- Which models are in closest agreement?
Variability of model predicted P-centres (ordered by mean prediction)

Error Bars show 95.0% CI of Mean
P-centre prediction variability by model
# Agreement between models

## Proximity Matrix

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<tr>
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<th>rapp</th>
<th>marcus</th>
<th>voscrasch</th>
<th>gordon</th>
<th>pmarschall</th>
<th>scott</th>
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This is a similarity matrix
Simple subjective evaluation

- **Quick test**
  - Identify sounds with lowest/highest variance in speech, synthetic and instrumental categories

- **For each model**
  - construct cyclic sequence of alternating sounds predicted to be perceptually isochronous
    - Nominal ISI is 600ms
    - Sequence pattern: A-B-A-B-A-B-A

- **Participant task**
  - Sequence presented once over headphones
  - Is sequence isochronous? Yes/no forced choice.

- **Analysis**
  - Are there sequences which are not judged perceptually regular for any/all models?
Subjective judgements of model predicted isochrony (non-speech)
Conclusions

- More data required, but initial data is suggestive
  - All models have problems with some sounds
  - Subjective isochrony appears to depend more on stimulus than model
    - Is P-centre of such stimuli ill-defined?
    - Do models share common assumptions or elements that result in common failures?

- Any future P-centre modelling exercise must consider a broader corpus of sounds
Thank you.

Questions?